Decreasing attraction among youth to join armed forces

280. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the youth in India today are no longer keen to join the armed forces;

(b) whether Government is taking measures to reverse this trend; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) There have been shortfalls in the intake of officers in the Armed Forces, which is partly attributable to changes in the socio-economic environment and the resultant change in career preferences, availability of employment opportunities in other sectors, tough selection procedures, difficult service career. The number of applicants for PBORs, however, indicate that the youth are keen to join the Armed Forces. There is no significant shortage of Personnel Below Officers Ranks (PBORs) either.

A number of steps have been taken to attract talented youth to join the Defence Forces. All officers including those in Short Service Commission (SSC) have been made eligible to hold substantive rank of Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel and equivalents after 2, 6 and 13 years of reckonable service respectively. The tenure of Short Service Commission (SSC) Officers has been extended to 14 years in the three Services. A total number of 750 posts of Lt. Colonel have been upgraded earlier to Colonel towards implementation of A V Singh Committee (Phase-I). Further, 1896 Posts in the ranks of colonel, Brigadier, Major General and Lieutenant General in the three Services have been upgraded towards implementation of A V Singh Committee (Phase-II). Several Proposals to reduce shortage of officers in the Armed Forces relating to reduction in the intake of Permanent Commissioned Officers along with increase in Short Service Commissioned (SSC) officers, changes in selection process, improvement in service conditions of SSC officers, augmentation of selection and training infrastructure etc. have been approved 'in principle' by Government. The implementation of the recommendation of the VI CPC with substantial improvement in the pay structure of Armed Forces personnel will also go a long way in making the Services more attractive.

Besides, the Armed Forces have undertaken sustained image projection and publicity campaign to create awareness among the youth on the advantages of taking up a challenging and satisfying career. Candidate-friendly recruitment procedures to attract more number of candidates and a focused publicity drive in various institutions to attract potential candidates have been undertaken. Awareness campaigns, participation in career fairs and exhibitions, advertisements in print and electronic media, motivational lectures in school, colleges are also some of the other measures in this direction.

Acquisition of new aircrafts

281. SHRI N. K. SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the only new acquisition since 2001 has been three squadrons of the SU 30 MKT; and

(b) whether it is also a fact that all other programmes including a deal to purchase 126 fighters and the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) proposal will take another 5 years to fructify before new aircrafts enter services?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) Induction of various aircraft are underway in addition to the Sukhoi 30 MKI to augment the squadron strength of the IAF. Responses have been received to the Request for Proposal for procurement of the Medium Multi Role Combat Aircraft and they are under technical evaluation. The acquisition process is on schedule and induction is likely to commence within the Eleventh Plan period. Further, the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft is likely to be inducted from 2010-11 onwards.

Resentment among armed forces against the recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission

282. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is resentment among the armed forces against the Sixth Pay Commission;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) The Services had submitted a representation to the Government bringing out certain issues arising out of the recommendations of the Sixth Central Pay Commission (CPC). The Government has decided on most of the issues. Subsequently, few more issues have been raised by the Services *viz.* grant of higher grade pay to Service officers, placement of Lt. Col. and equivalent in Pay Band - 4, reinstatement of pensionary weightages for Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR), providing Higher Administrative Grade + Pay Band for Lt. Generals and equivalent holding post of principal Staff Officer, Director Generals, Controllers, etc.

Minister of External Affairs in consultation with the Defence Minister and the Finance Minister has decided on the various issues.

Successful trial of Nag missile

283. SHRI M. V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that winter trials of Nag missile has been completed successfully;

(b) if so, the details of Nag's capabilities;

(c) whether the DRDO is set to test this summer for its Summer trials; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) Yes, Sir.